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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0136
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6025
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 3344
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7194
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4457
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1732
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1747
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 3943
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4363
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 8927
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SUBJECT: INDIGENOUS WOMAN TO LEAD ASSEMBLY

¶1. (SBU) On July 29, President Morales designated Silvia Lazarte as the MAS' candidate for Constituent Assembly (CA) president, noting that she represents two sectors that have been historically excluded: women and the indigenous. Opposition parties criticized

the nomination process as too one-sided, referring to Lazarte as "Morales' candidate" and citing undue interference by the executive branch in her election. They emphasized that MAS assembly members, and not Morales, should select the party's nominee. The National Unity party's Samuel Doria Medina said that his party would not support Lazarte's candidacy due to Morales' meddling in Assembly affairs. However, on August 1, after Vice President Garca Linera ratified Lazarte's nomination, and dispelled accusations that Morales had personally appointed her, Podemos conceded that a MAS candidate should assume the presidency.

¶2. (SBU) Lazarte, 42, is a Quechua Indian and former cocalero organizer from Cochabamba. She was elected to the CA as a department-wide representative of Santa Cruz, and, like Morales, believes the social movements should oversee the Assembly. Lazarte has extensive syndicalist experience and a somewhat murky past: She held leadership positions in the Nuevo Chapare union, the Federacion de Mujeres del Tropico de Cochabamba, the National Federation of Peasant Women Bartolina Sisa, and the Nueva Amrica community. She was detained in January 2002 for suspected involvement in the death of four military and police officers following a confrontation between cocaleros and security forces. Lazarte is married with three children, two of whom are adopted.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: The Assembly will elect its president and directorate sometime after August 6, when it convenes for the first time. While Lazarte's nomination is interesting for social inclusion reasons, many wonder if she has the capacity, experience, or leadership to manage this historic event. End comment.

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